

No Joy for Murray Basin Rail Project

The Rail Freight Alliance (RFA) expresses deep concern that the 20/21 Federal Budget allows no funding for the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP).

In 2016 the Commonwealth Government granted the Victorian Government \$220 Million to fund 50% of the Murray Basin Rail Project. Once complete is intended to drive economic growth, create jobs, and provide a major boost to the transport industry, agricultural sector and regional communities. The project was heralded as supporting freight mode shift from road to rail, removing around 20,000 truck trips from our roads to ports and improving safety for Victorian communities.

Through mismanagement of the Victorian State Government, currently the MBRP project is incomplete and at a standstill. The project has decreased freight capacity from this region. RFA believes that more of the freight task is being delivered by road and that freight costs from the region have increased as a consequence of the current state of the MBRP.

The RFA has been in dialog with the Federal Government over many years seeking funding to support getting the Murray Basin Rail Project back on track and ensure the project is completed to the Victorian Government's original scope.

At a time when the Federal Government is boasting an infrastructure lead COVID recovery budget, and a need to invest money wisely this project ticks all the boxes, it's shovel ready, will boost jobs, attract private investment, support businesses to recover and grow, enhance Victoria's growing exports and freight task. Now is the time to invest in this nation building project.

COVID has highlighted the importance in freight and logistic and the need to move freight freely across the country, putting freight on rail can solve this, the infrastructure just needs to be in place.

RFA are led to believe lack of information from the Victorian State Government and lack of Victorian State Government consultation with Industry has left the Federal Government no option but to leave the MBRP out of the Budget.

The Mexican standoff between the Federal and Victorian Government is a convenient out for both Governments, it doesn't solve the problem and leaves the people of Victoria and the nation poorer for it.

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